



CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



Bureau of Police

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EXECUTIVE ORDER

DATE: October 8, 2008

TO: All Members

RE: DIR 631.10 Dead Body Procedures

ACTION: Major revisions were made to this directive. See attached directive for the comparison.

631.10 DEAD BODY PROCEDURE

Index: Title

Refer: ORS 146.095 Responsibility for Investigation

DIR 612.10 Death Messages

DIR 640.10 Crime Scene Procedures

DIR 640.60 Dying Declaration – Homicide

PROCEDURE (631.10)

Directive Specific Definitions:

Radio Procedures: Due to the prevalence of radio monitors, specific radio codes will be used in describing the type of death the officer is at. The code 55-A will be used when describing a homicide situation. The code 55-K will be used when describing all other deaths.

Medical Response: If the officer observes any signs of life, medical shall be requested to the scene to provide medical attention or determine death. Medical personnel on scene will determine whether the patient will be transported to a medical facility.

Preservation of a Death Scene: If there is a possibility that a crime has been committed, the scene will be preserved by the officers and supervisors on scene until relieved by an investigator or supervisor from the investigative detail.

When death has been established, the following actions shall be taken:

- a. The Medical Examiner's office shall be contacted and provided the details and circumstances surrounding the death. When death appears to have resulted from natural causes and no physician is available to sign the death certificate, or it is uncertain if a physician will sign the death certificate, the Medical Examiner (ME) shall be notified. The member may contact the ME's office directly or request the ME through BOEC. After discussing the circumstances with the member, the ME may choose to respond to the scene or authorize the release of the remains to a mortuary.

- b. The member shall not disturb the body or property at the scene of the death, nor permit any other person, other than the ME, to do so (exception noted in paragraph c. 1). Access to the scene should be restricted to preserve evidence.
- c. The member shall assist the ME in investigating the conditions surrounding the death.
- d. When the death appears to have resulted from natural causes and a licensed physician who will sign the death certificate responds to the scene, members have no further responsibility except to provide any reasonable assistance requested by the deceased's family in their time of need. Members may occasionally be called to the scene of the death of a hospice patient. Hospice situations in Multnomah County can be identified by the presence of a red envelope containing medical information and orders. Hospice patients are under the care of a licensed physician who will sign the death certificate; therefore, the above procedure is applicable.
- e. When death has apparently resulted from an apparent drug overdose, suicide, or natural causes (with no family or physician present) and there is no suspicion of foul play, the member shall immediately notify the ME's office. The ME will respond to the scene and verify the cause of death. If there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death, the body will be removed by the ME and the member will prepare the appropriate investigative report.
- f. If the ME determines that suspicious circumstances exist or there is evidence that will assist in identifying a suspect involved in the distribution of the drugs associated with the overdose case, the ME may request the member to:
 - 1. Contact the Homicide sergeant on duty during business hours or the on-call Homicide sergeant after hours, and have them respond to the scene to investigate the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death.
 - 2. Contact DVD sergeant during business hours or the on-call DVD sergeant after hours, and have them respond to the scene to investigate the drug connection surrounding the overdose.
- g. The examination of the body and the determination of the cause and manner of death will be the responsibility of the ME's office.
- h. The responsibility for the criminal investigation will be assumed by the investigating detectives or a detective sergeant upon their arrival.
- i. If the member determines that the death is an obvious homicide or the circumstances exist that may lead to a homicide investigation, the Homicide sergeant on duty during business hours or the on-call Homicide sergeant after hours, shall be contacted by the supervisor on the scene.
 - 1. The ME shall also be notified of the homicide or the suspicious death. The ME may choose to defer responding to the scene until after the initial assessment by the Homicide sergeant.
- j. When death has resulted from a traffic accident, the Traffic Division shall be responsible for the complete investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident and exchange information, as necessary, with the ME's office.
- k. When a death has occurred on a waterway with the City, MCSO will be responsible for the investigation. If a death, or a crime leading to a death, occurs on land, but the body is found in a waterway, Bureau members will be responsible for the investigation. MCSO will assist the Bureau with retrieval and transportation of the body, if needed. If a body is found in a waterway, and the initial investigation is unable to determine the investigative

responsibility for the scene, detectives and MCSO will consult with each other to determine the responsibility for the investigation.

1. When the body is to be turned over to the ME's office, it shall be searched by a representative of that office only. Members will not search the body unless otherwise directed by the ME's office.
 1. The member who has been in charge of the body until the arrival of the ME will remain and be present during the search. The member shall, when possible, remain and sign the ME's property receipt as a witness. The member will then be provided a copy of the receipt and will attach it to his/her report.
 2. It shall be the responsibility of the assigned member to protect the body and its effects from theft or tampering prior to the arrival of the ME.
- m. It is the responsibility of the ME's office to notify relatives or friends of the deceased. The Bureau shall honor any reasonable request from the ME's office for assistance in this matter.

When investigative details are contacted or summoned to a death scene, the following responsibilities are to be followed:

1. Drugs and Vice Division (DVD) Responsibilities
 - a) The principal criteria for mounting a DVD investigation response will be the presence of actionable investigative leads that offer a strong likelihood of identifying a suspect involved in the distribution of the drugs associated with the overdose death.
 - b) The DVD sergeant will evaluate the information provided by the responding officers and determine whether to call out an investigator. If the DVD sergeant believes the case may be something other than an overdose, he/she will re-contact the Detective Division. The Forensic Evidence Division (Forensics) will be contacted for photographs when DVD responds to investigate an overdose death. The DVD investigator will coordinate the investigation with the Medical Examiner's Office.
 - c) If DVD declines to respond, members will conduct the case as any death investigation:
 - 1) Members will assist the Medical Examiner's Office and write a report.
 - 2) Identify and collect any evidence they believe may be relevant (after consultation with the Medical Examiner's Office).
 - 3) Contact the DVD sergeant if any new information develops that may lead to identification of the drug dealer.
2. Homicide Detail Responsibilities
 - a) The Homicide sergeant will communicate with the supervisor on the scene to ensure that the scene and evidence are being preserved.
 - b) The Homicide sergeant will coordinate the response of the detectives, criminalists from Forensics, the district attorney's office, the ME, and any support units necessary for the investigation.
 - c) Upon arrival, the Homicide sergeant or designee will assume command of the scene and the investigation.
 - d) Criminalists from Forensics will process the scene and collect any evidence identified as pertinent to the investigation.

- e) When requested to respond, or if already present, the ME assumes responsibility for the body and the removal of the body from the scene.
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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact Marsha Palmer, Strategic Services Division, at 503-823-0264.

ROSANNE M. SIZER
Chief of Police

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